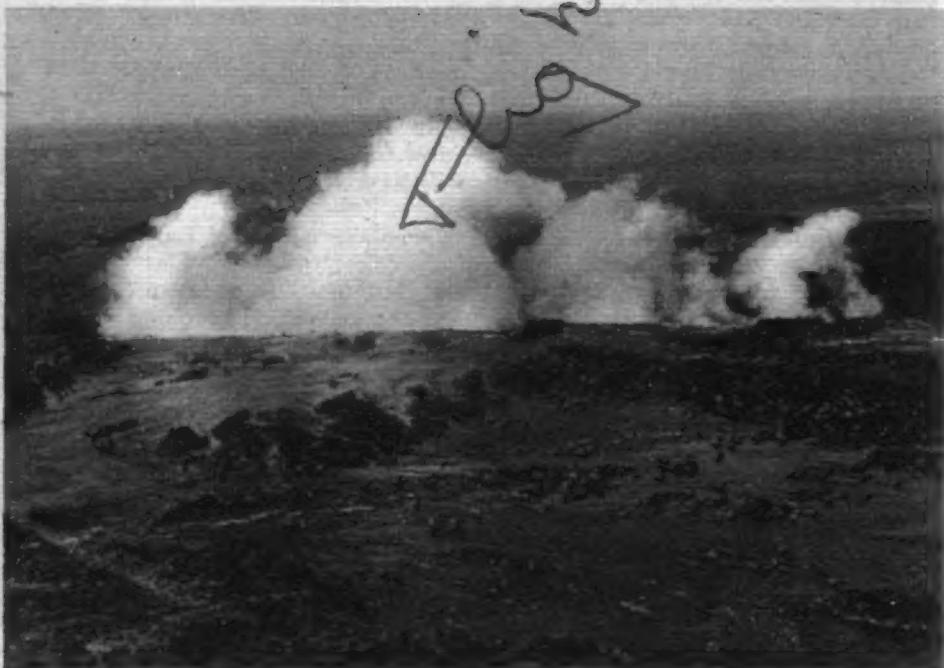


B.O.A.C.
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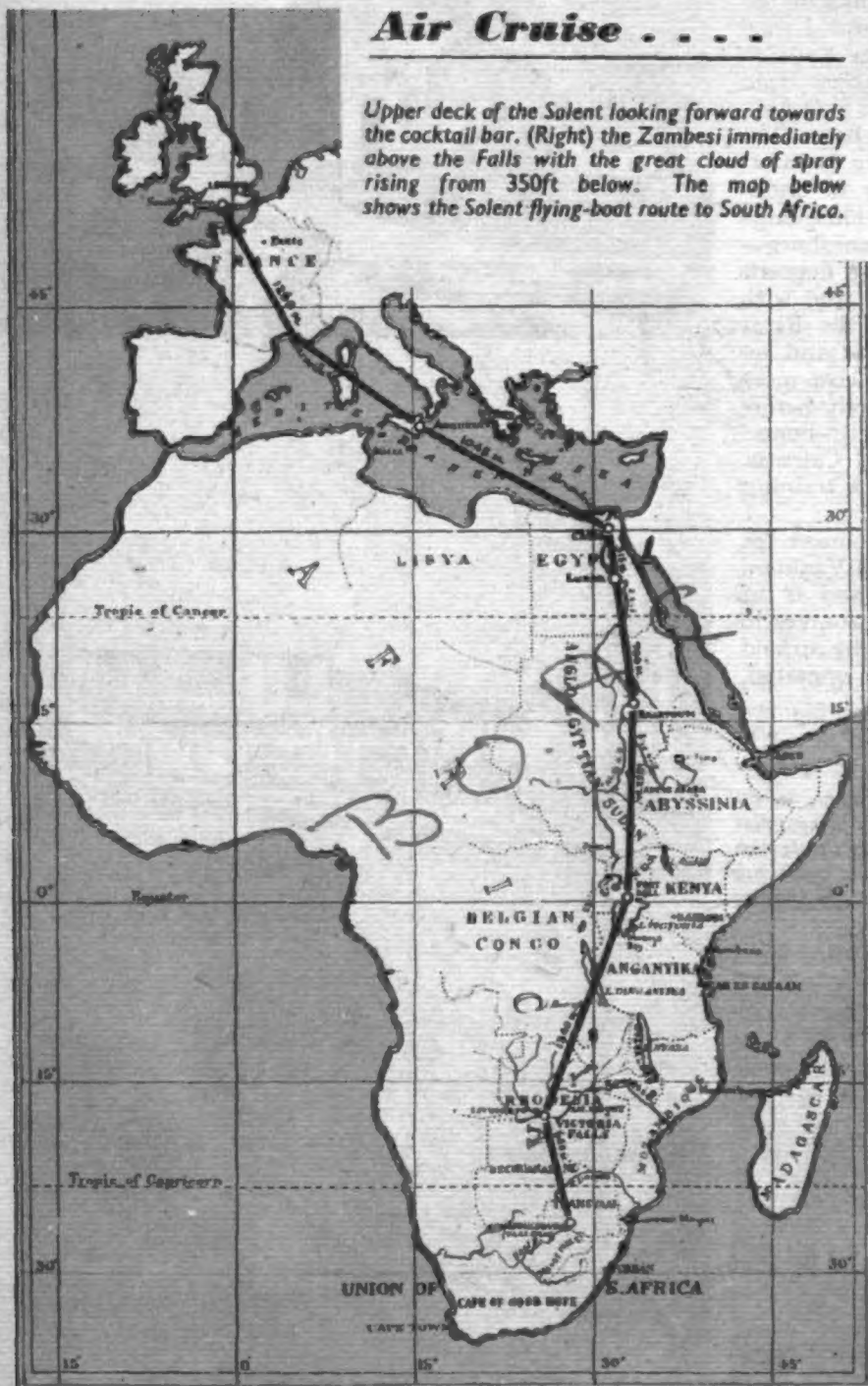
FLIGHT

June 3rd 1948



Air Cruise

Upper deck of the Solent looking forward towards the cocktail bar. (Right) the Zambesi immediately above the Falls with the great cloud of spray rising from 350ft below. The map below shows the Solent flying-boat route to South Africa.



craft is high, and in the Solent it is probably at its best. Frozen food is heated in special ovens, and excellent meals are served at normal times. The Solent, which was described in *Flight* of August 21st, 1947, has accommodation for fourteen passengers on the lower deck forward of a gentlemen's dressing room, while the aft portion has seats for eight, a promenade deck and the ladies' powder room. The two decks are connected by a spiral companionway, entailing an easy climb to seek the reward from a cocktail bar on the upper deck, where also there is accommodation for twelve passengers. It is undoubtedly a great relief on a long air journey to walk and stand about without performing antics over the seats of other passengers, to order drinks at a bar, and to lean on a sill whilst looking out of a window. It is to be hoped that the noise level will be reduced, for at present the Solent suffers from vibration in the aft cabins. Although there is a belief that the need for oxygen at heights between 10,000 and 15,000ft is mainly psychological, it has been my experience that several hours' high flying produces some discomfort, especially to elderly passengers. It is obviously necessary to fly at height during the heat of the day and when necessary to climb above the weather, but passengers will require some method of overcoming such discomfort other than by the use of masks. My main criticism is against the chairs at tables, which do not allow sufficient room for entry and exit, also the chair adjustment which is actuated by a clumsy knob on each side of the arm is old-fashioned compared with the press-button arrangement found in most modern aircraft.

B.O.A.C. are making the best of their case for the Solent. Extreme comfort, backed by long and unique experience on flying-boats and comfortable ground accommodation for four nights is a service exclusive to passengers on British Airways. It would not be unreasonable to charge extra for such a service. The single fare, first-class, by sea is £144, while the air passage by Skymaster or Solent costs £167, and the balance would probably be spent during the 15 days at sea. More frequent services would help to offset the overheads, and an increase to more than three services a week will be made if necessary.

I have sought the opinion of travel agents in the U.K. and in South Africa. They believe in the flying-boat and, moreover, are of the opinion that it will do more to encourage air travel than the express landplane service. It is to be hoped that the flying-boat experiment will be given fair trial.